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SENATE RESOLUTION 107
By Williams

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the fiftieth anniversary of NASCAR.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this body should pause to honor the organizers, participants and fans of the fastest growing sport in America today, NASCAR racing; and

WHEREAS, this year, NASCAR is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary of organizing and sanctioning the most entertaining and exhilarating sport known to mankind; and

WHEREAS, the birth of NASCAR can be traced to a meeting in Daytona Beach, Florida in December, 1947, when race driver and promoter, Bill France, Sr., called together a group of his peers to bring organization, control and respect to the burgeoning sport of stock car racing. The group formed the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing and incorporated the sanctioning body in February, 1948; and

WHEREAS, NASCAR's first race was a modified event on the Daytona Beach course that was run on the beachfront and paved public highway; and

WHEREAS, the event that launched NASCAR as the major force in American automobile racing, however, occurred the next year when, on June 19, 1949, NASCAR sanctioned a race in Charlotte, North Carolina for "Strictly Stock" automobiles that were modern showroom sedans; and

WHEREAS, NASCAR's formative decade from 1947-1958, owes much of its spice, fire and history to Daytona Beach, Charlotte and the mountains of the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Georgia; and

WHEREAS, in 1950, the inaugural Southern 500 was run at the 1.25 mile Darlington Raceway. The Southern 500 was NASCAR's first 500 mile race, and the first at a paved track built expressly for the Grand National sedans; and

WHEREAS, before 1959, NASCAR's Grand National Division was known more for its individual events than for the cohesiveness of the series; beginning in 1959, a period of growth occurred which succeeded in making stock car racing a mainstream sport in the South and a major player in the national motor sports picture; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the inaugural Daytona 500 at NASCAR's showcase, the Daytona International Speedway, was won by Lee Petty in a photo finish with Johnny Beauchamp; and

WHEREAS, the stars of the 1959-1970 era were: Fred Lorenzen; Ned Jarrett; and a North Carolina chicken farmer named Junior Johnson, whose story was told in a 1995 *Esquire* Magazine article by Tom Wolfe, in which he dubbed Johnson "the last American hero"; and

WHEREAS, the race tracks that were founded during this period include: Daytona International Speedway; Charlotte Motor Speedway; Atlanta Motor Speedway; Dover (Delaware) Downs International Speedway; Michigan Speedway; Riverside (California) International Raceway; Bristol (Tennessee) Motor Speedway; and Talladega (Alabama) Super Speedway, at 2.66 miles, the biggest stock car oval in the world. Grand National racing moved away from the dirt ovals and fairgrounds to paved, high-banked speedways designed to put competitive stock car racing before ever-larger crowds; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, the last NASCAR Grand National division race was run on a dirt track at Raleigh, North Carolina; in the same year, NASCAR's largest oval track opened at Talladega; and

WHEREAS, 1971-1980 truly represented the "Glory Years" for NASCAR; and

WHEREAS, after traveling along a sometimes bumpy road in its first quarter century, NASCAR had evolved from rough-hewn backwoods tracks to a stage where dirt had completely disappeared from the equation; and

WHEREAS, the stars of NASCAR during this era were: Cale Yarborough, David Pearson and Richard Petty who, with 200 victories and seven championships, was the most successful NASCAR Winston Cup driver and, even though he is now retired, is still universally known as “the King”; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, the NASCAR race schedule was trimmed from 48 races to 31, marking the beginning of what is called the “Modern Era” of NASCAR Winston Cup Racing; and

WHEREAS, NASCAR’s popularity grew tremendously in the 1980s, a fact that didn’t go unnoticed by consumer product company sponsors; and

WHEREAS, many of the most important moves that sparked this explosion of growth in the 1980s came off the track, as NASCAR expanded by adding new racing series and formalizing its structure; and

WHEREAS, the stars of the decade were: Tim Richmond; Bobby Allison; and the two drivers that dominated the 1980s, Darrell Waltrip and Dale Earnhardt; and

WHEREAS, in 1984, Richard Petty won his 200th race on July 4 before a crowd that included President Ronald Reagan; and

WHEREAS, the 1990s have been a pivotal period for NASCAR; during this era, stock car racing has moved from being a regional attraction to a national phenomenon on the level of other major-league sports; and

WHEREAS, national media outlets now cover NASCAR on a regular basis, and television networks have made the sport a staple of their programming lineup; and

WHEREAS, the decade has been a transitional period both on and off the track; the sport has gone from being staged in smaller markets, mainly in the Southeast, to venues in

major metropolitan areas, including the historic Indianapolis Motor Speedway, the new Texas Motor Speedway near Dallas/Ft. Worth and the California Speedway near Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, there is a new crop of engaging and talented stars who have benefited greatly from surging corporate sponsorship and support; and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, NASCAR found new ways to reach racing fans with theme stores and restaurants; the first NASCAR Café opened in 1997; and

WHEREAS, the NASCAR stars of today include: Bobby Labonte; Jeff Burton; Jeff Gordon; and as fans have become more familiar with the other major personalities in NASCAR Winston Cup racing, crew chief Ray Evernham; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Jeff Gordon became only the second driver to capture The Winston Million by winning three of NASCAR's four crown jewel events at Daytona, Charlotte and Darlington; and

WHEREAS, Bristol Motor Speedway in Bristol, Tennessee is one of the premier speedways on the NASCAR circuit; and

WHEREAS, with 131,000 available seats, Bristol Motor Speedway is the largest sporting arena in the State of Tennessee and ranks among the top five NASCAR speedways in seating capacity; and

WHEREAS, built on the former site of a dairy farm, Bristol Motor Speedway hosted its first NASCAR race on July 30, 1961 with a seating capacity of a mere 18,000; and

WHEREAS, a total of 42 cars started this initial race at Bristol but in the true stock car tradition, only 19 finished; and

WHEREAS, in August 1992, Bristol Motor Speedway was the first speedway to host a Winston Cup event that boasted a track surface that was all concrete; and

WHEREAS, during its 37-year existence, Bristol Motor Speedway has proven to be a good neighbor in the Tri-Cities community, as well as a purveyor of quality racing events; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, Bristol Motor Speedway contributed $1,175,600 to non-profit organizations, primarily in the Tri-Cities area; and

WHEREAS, NASCAR and the Bristol Motor Speedway are richly deserving of this body's commendation for their important roles in making this nation's most thrilling sport also one of its most successful; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That we hereby honor and recognize the fiftieth anniversary of NASCAR, commend this exemplary organization on a job well done and wish everyone associated with NASCAR much continued prosperity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we likewise honor and commend the Bristol Motor Speedway as an exemplary component of the NASCAR success story and a concerned and compassionate corporate citizen.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.